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***REGION WIDE COALITION LAUNCHES INTENSIFIED CITIZEN PUSH  
FOR PURPLE LINE WITH EYE ON 2006 ELECTIONS***

**Bethesda, Maryland (May 24, 2006)** – Energized by the Montgomery County Council's unanimous approval of the first funding allocation for the hub between Metro's Red Line and the western terminus of the long-planned Purple Line, a region wide coalition of business, transportation, environmental, labor and civic groups today launched an intensified citizen push to build the light rail transit line between Bethesda and New Carrollton. Coalition leaders said the push is timed to make the Purple Line a top issue in the 2006 local and state elections.

Purple Line supporters include the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line, Action Committee for Transit, League of Women Voters, Metropolitan Washington Council/AFL-CIO, Sierra Club/Montgomery County Group, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Clean Energy Partnership and many more organizations.

"Today, tomorrow and Friday, our diverse coalition, now more than 90 organizations strong, is taking to the streets to say, 'We will not accept the status quo. We will not let things get worse,'" said Montgomery County Council President George Leventhal (D-At Large). "With inspired leadership, we will take action now to build the Purple Line in this decade, to protect our quality of life by easing traffic congestion, clearing the air, saving energy and thwarting global climate change."

Beginning early this morning in Silver Spring near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and I-495, coalition leaders and supporters are holding a series of high-profile pre-Memorial Day rallies at strategic locations inside the Beltway. Tomorrow, there will be a noontime rally for the business community in downtown Bethesda. Early Friday morning, a third rally will be held in Chevy Chase where the proposed Purple Line route crosses Connecticut Avenue.

"With gas prices hovering around three dollars a gallon, the Purple Line is needed more urgently than ever before," said Webb Smedley, chair of the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line. "With no end in sight to the gas price crisis, people are being forced to change their behavior and are looking for ways to get out of their cars."

"Building the Purple Line would give commuters a way to speed past Beltway traffic jams and help end the gridlock that has made our region the third worst in the nation for traffic congestion," said Ben Ross, president of the Action Committee for Transit.

"An alternative mobility solution such as the Purple Line will reduce our over-reliance on fossil fuels, which is the leading cause of global climate change," said Anne Ambler, chair of the Sierra Club/Montgomery County Group. "The Purple Line is one of the keys to a green future in this region."

"Candidates for local and state offices need to jump on board the Purple Line, to provide gridlock relief in one of the most congested regions of the country," said Andrew J. Scott, director of government relations for the Greater Washington Board of Trade. "While transportation is always a concern of voters here, polling has shown that nearly 80% of likely voters in Montgomery County support the Purple Line. Voters want the Purple Line."

Ross added that a recent leafleting campaign at Metro stations throughout Montgomery County triggered 500 letters of support to the County Council. Forty-four percent of those letters came from people who live outside the Beltway. "This is clearly a countywide issue," Ross said.

Part of the Montgomery County master plan for 20 years, the Purple Line will connect suburban communities and job centers, providing an alternative to driving on the congested Beltway. The line would serve the town centers of Bethesda, Silver Spring, Langley Park, College Park and New Carrollton, with two stops on the University of Maryland campus. It will tie together four Metro lines and three MARC commuter rail lines.

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Montgomery County Council President George Leventhal (center, wearing leather jacket) joins Purple Line Coalition leaders and supporters at a Wednesday morning rally in Silver Spring, MD dramatizing the urgent need for the Purple Line with gas prices hovering around \$3.00 a gallon.



Purple Line Coalition members John Carroll (left) and Harry Sanders at the Wednesday morning rally in Silver Spring, MD dramatizing the urgent need for the Purple Line with gas prices hovering around \$3.00 a gallon.





Reporter from NewsChannel 8 interviews Montgomery County Council President George Leventhal at a Wednesday morning rally in Silver Spring, MD dramatizing the urgent need for the Purple Line with gas prices hovering around \$3.00 a gallon.